We would like to summit the following focus group summary report to aid in the discussions under Theme 3 - Observing in Support of Indigenous Food Security and Related Needs. This report is the direct reflections of discussions with Inuit representatives from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of Canada and Alaska about Food Sovereignty and Self Governance.

This report reflects the knowledge and perspectives of Indigenous Knowledge holders attending the Collective Meeting. The report should be cited as: Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska. 2019. Food Sovereignty and Self Governance Collective Meeting: *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance - Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources*. Anchorage, Alaska.

Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources[1]

Collective Meeting Summary Report

Photo: Shannon Williams

Food sovereignty is the right of [all] Inuit to define their own hunting, gathering, fishing, land and water policies; the right to define what is sustainable and socially, economically and culturally appropriate for the distribution of food and to maintain ecological health; the right to obtain and maintain practices that ensure access to tools needed to obtain, process, store and consume traditional foods. Within the Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework, food sovereignty is a necessity for supporting and maintaining the six dimensions of food security: Accessibility, Availability, Inuit Culture, Decision-Making Power and Management, Health and Wellness, and Stability.[2]

[1] This work is supported through a National Science Foundation grant (grant no. 1732373). No opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

[2] Inuit Circumpolar Council-Alaska. 2015. Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework: How to Assess the Arctic From an Inuit Perspective. Technical Report. Anchorage, AK.

Citation

This report reflects the knowledge and perspectives of Indigenous Knowledge holders attending the Collective Meeting. The report should be cited as: Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska. 2019. Food Sovereignty and Self Governance Collective Meeting: *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance - Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources*. Anchorage, Alaska.

The meeting was facilitated by Carolina Behe with assistance from Shannon Williams and Eilene Adams of ICC Alaska. Vanessa Cunningham of the Fisheries Joint Management Committee also provided support and assistance throughout the meeting. Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough, a member of the project team, also participated in the Collective Meeting. This report was compiled by Carolina Behe and Shannon Williams, with edits provided by Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough and David Roche. The report has been reviewed and edited by the workshop participants.

Photo: Carolina Behe

Quyanainni/Koana/Quyana/Igamsiganaghhalek/Quyanaq!

We are grateful to the many people whose help and support made the Collective Meeting possible.

Quyana to the community of Bethel for hosting us, with special thanks to Vivian Korthuis and Jennifer Hooper with the Association of Village Council Presidents and Mary Sattler Peltola with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission for all of your support and assistance in the preparation, organization, and implementation of the meeting and associated events.

Quyanainni/Koana to Michelle Gruben, Bridget Wolki, Diane Ruben, Glenna Emaghok, Anita Gruben, Bessi Inuktalik, and the Aklavik, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Olokhaktomiut, and Sachs Harbour Hunters & Trappers Committee's for assisting with the coordinating and communication with potential participants, the organization of travel from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region to Alaska, and for being wonderful to work with.

Igamsiganaghhalek to Vera Metcalf for all of your invaluable contributions and support throughout the planning and organization of the meeting.

Thank you to Vanessa Cunningham of Fisheries Joint Management Committee and Chanda Turner of the Inuvialuit Game Council for all of your assistance and support throughout the planning, coordination, and organization of the Collective Meeting.

Quyana to Mary K. Henry, Jennifer Hooper, Doris T. Mute, Charlene Wuya, and Crystal Samuelson for preparing food and making our potluck event possible. Quyana to Kuskokwim Campus dancers and their leader Ben Agimuk for sharing songs and dances at our potluck, and especially your flexibility in being able to join us on short notice. Quyana to Benjamin Charles with the Association of Village Council Presidents Yupiit Piciyarait Museum, for welcoming us into the museum, for sharing your knowledge and time, and for providing a lunch time discussion about Yup'ik mask making.

Quyana to all of the participants for your time and valuable contributions to this project!

About the Food Sovereignty and Self Governance –
Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources *(FSSG project)*

The FSSG project is a follow up to our 2015 report How to Assess Food Security from an Inuit Perspective: Building a Conceptual Framework on How to Assess Food Security in the Alaskan Arctic. Through workshops, focus group meetings, research, and analysis associated with that project, a central theme emerged: that food security and food sovereignty were undeniably linked. It was concluded that without food sovereignty, we cannot realize food security. The key recommendation derived from that report is to analyze management and co-management structures within Inuit Nunaat and to understand how those governing frameworks need to be modified to achieve Inuit food sovereignty. The FSSG project aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of existing and emerging frameworks supporting Inuit self-governance by examining the current management and co-management of Arctic marine food resources. The three key objectives of the project are:

- Synthesize and evaluate existing frameworks for Inuit management and co-management of marine food resources presently reflected in law, policies, and legal authorities in the United States and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of Canada;
- Evaluate how existing Inuit self-governance is operationalized by examining four co-management case studies focused on marine resources that are aimed at ensuring food sovereignty, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the social, political, and institutional parameters affecting implementation of key legal frameworks:
- Assess how Inuit self-governance supports food security by evaluating food sovereignty objectives against the existing legal and structural frameworks and their effective implementation and outcomes

The work is structured around four case studies – salmon and walrus in Alaska and char and beluga in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. These case studies are used as a pathway to a larger, interrelated discussion about management and food sovereignty.

The project is made up of a team that includes the Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska, The Inuit Circumpolar Council Chair, and the Environmental Law Institute. Other partners include the Association of Village Council Presidents, Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Eskimo Walrus Commission, Inuvialuit Game Council, and the Fisheries Joint Management Commission. The project is guided by an Advisory Committee made up of the project partners and further advised by the Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada.

The final report is scheduled for completion by March 31, 2020.

About the Collective Meeting

On February 28 and March 1, 2019, the Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska convened the Collective Meeting as part of the Inuit-led project, *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance: Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources* (FSSG). The goal of the Collective Meeting was to bring together the Partners of the FSSG project and key people identified by those partners that hold unique knowledge and will further advance discussions on food sovereignty and self-governance. Over the two-day meeting, participants and representatives of the Eskimo Walrus Commission, Fisheries Joint Management Committee, Inuvialuit Game Council, Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fisheries Commission, and the Association of Village Council Presidents discussed key themes that have been identified thus far, from information gathered through focus group meetings and individual interviews.

In addition, meeting participants elaborated upon decision making pathways within their own management structures, Inuit management processes, and international processes; explored what supports or impedes food sovereignty; and began to identify key actions or recommendations needed to move toward Inuit food sovereignty and self-governance across the Arctic. The meeting, which was held at the Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center in Bethel, Alaska, was attended by 24 Indigenous Knowledge (IK) holders (referred to as participants throughout the report). Quyanainni / Koana / Quyana / Igamsiganaghhalek / Quyanaq to all of those who were able to attend:

Alecia Lennie
Anita Pokiak
Anna Ashenfelter
Charlie R. Charlie
Eli Nasogaluak
Darrel John
Dean Arey
Donovan Arey
Fred Phillip
Hans Lennie
James Charles
James Nicori
Janelle Carl
Jennifer Hooper
Jerry Inglangasuk
Lorna Storr
Mary Sattler Peltola
Mike Williams, Sr.
Moses Owen
Phillip K. Peter
Richard Binder
Robert Lekander
Vera Metcalf
Vivian Korthuis

Meeting Structure

The FSSG Collective Meeting was organized with a goal of expanding on the discussions that occurred through focus group meetings, workshops, and individual interviews within Alaska and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR). Meeting participants were selected by or in collaboration with the Project Partners. Participants were selected for their Indigenous Knowledge, expertise, and experience within management.

Drawing created by Participants attending the FSSG Collective meeting and a meeting held directly prior, the Youth, Elder, Active Hunter and Gatherer Workshop

Project Partners - As shared above, the Project Partners are the Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC), Fisheries Joint Management Committee (FJMC), Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC), Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), and ICC Ottawa.

Within Alaska, there are 97 Tribal Councils within the four regions that ICC Alaska advocates on behalf of. The KRITFC is made up of 33 Tribes along the Kuskokwim River (both Yup'ik and Athabascan Tribes). This project works with the Yup'ik members of the KRITFC and some Cup'ik communities. AVCP is the regional non-profit for 56 Tribes within the Yukon-Kuskokwim Region.

EWC is made up of commissioners from 19 villages, including from Kwigillingok (Yup'ik) in southwest Alaska to Gambell and Savoonga (St. Lawrence Yupik) in the Bering Straits to Wainwright and Utqiagvik on the north slope (Inupiat).

The ISR includes six communities. The IGC is made up of Hunters and Trappers Committee representatives from the six villages within the ISR, for a total of six representatives and one elected chair. FJMC includes two

Inuvialuit members and two members appointed by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Collective Meeting Representation - Unfortunately, due to severe weather throughout Alaska, only one of the seven intended EWC representatives were able to attend. Additionally, last minute scheduling conflicts, illness, and weather delays prevented a few people from the Yukon Kuskokwim region and Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) from attending the meeting. In some cases, a few new participants were nominated to attend the meeting in place of those that were unavailable.

This changed the dynamic of the conversations held. The resulting discussions reflected a mixture of participants that had been involved in the project from the beginning and some that were new to the dialogue. Bringing in new voices while exploring the themes more deeply provided rich perspectives and strong contributions to the overall project.

Meeting Set-up - The meeting was structured around methodologies developed in conjunction with the project partners and the FSSG Advisory Committee. Throughout the day, we promoted a flexible and relaxed environment. Focus was placed on exchange of information and knowledge through deep discussions between participants. Discussions were held in both small "break out groups" and collectively as one group. The smaller groups provided an opportunity to have in-depth discussions and created a supportive environment for some who feel less comfortable contributing in the larger group setting. As shared above, this meeting was about Inuit coming together from diverse regions. The smaller groups also encouraged a good exchange and intermix from different areas across Inuit Nunaat. For example, groups had individuals from different areas of Alaska and different areas of the ISR.

Photo: Eilene Adams

During the workshop, participants were encouraged to talk and express

themselves in any way that they felt they needed to. For some this meant standing and walking around freely. For others it meant sitting and taking notes. To further encourage people to express themselves in a way that is culturally appropriate for them, art supplies were provided.

Participants were provided with pieces of paper and markers to draw or sketch throughout the day. Additionally, a large canvas and paint pens were placed to the side of the room. Participants drew and wrote on the canvas throughout the workshop.

As with all of our project gatherings, we shared lots of food and laughter throughout the day, including a potluck as well as drumming and dancing!

Photo: Carolina Behe

Different Management Structures

A key component to FSSG is Inuit coming together to share their knowledge and experiences and to learn about and from the different co-management systems within different areas of Inuit Nunaat. The Collective meeting provided a good opportunity to hear a brief description of the co-management systems directly from those involved on a day-to-day basis.

There are many differences among the management structures that can be noted in the brief descriptions offered. Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough noted that a key difference "…between the management structures in the ISR and

Alaska is that through the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) there is recognition of Aboriginal right and title to their land as distinct people." The IFA recognizes that the Inuvialuit hold rights to the lands, territory and resources. She highlighted that IFA provisions explicitly "…recognize and respect their [Inuvialuit] right to hunting, fishing and gathering. In, Alaska the system is completely different. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in a few words purportedly extinguished aboriginal hunting and fishing rights." While another person further stressed, during the meeting, that the IFA ensures that they have the right to harvest any animal for food (personal/community use). While another participant stressed how over-regulated Indigenous peoples are in Alaska.

Dr. Dorough also underscored the difference in the type of agreement that the IFA and ANCSA offer. While the IFA is a living agreement, the ANCSA is regarded as a settlement. "The term settlement from the point of view of the United States government was that it [the ANCSA] was resolved. It's not a living agreement…" (Dorough. 2019).

In reflection of all the management systems, participants agreed that there is room to make all of them better and much more responsive to all of our people.

Mural on the Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center. Photo: Shannon Williams

Report Summary

The below provides a brief summary and general overview of the discussion held throughout the meeting. Though this section is broken into bolded headings, all headings are interrelated, interdependent, and indivisible. For example, when speaking about the need for adaptive management strategies,

one must also consider traditional Inuit management practices, the health and well-being of people and animals, variability in weather, and many other related components.

Key Themes/Concepts Discussed

The meeting was facilitated using a combination of guiding questions that were informed by the ICC Alaska food security report and further refined by the FSSG Advisory Committee and the information gathered throughout the project.

- Personal Experiences in gathering food for you, your family, for your community
- Consultation processes as they relate to and impact your food gathering activities
- Decision-making pathways
- Indigenous Knowledge and Research questions
- Information accessibility and knowledge sharing
- Taking care of our homelands and waters, and what tools are used
- Impacts of regulations on the wellbeing of animals, water, land, air, and Inuit (i.e. culture, physical and mental well-being)

Key concepts that have emerged, to date, throughout the focus groups, workshops, and individual interviews held during the FSSG project were highlighted and supported deeper discussions:

- Equity
- Language
- Inuit rules/protocols/ processes
- Inuit Ways of Life Reflected in Management
- Climate Change
- Impacts of national and international regulations
- Competition of resources
- Funding
- Sharing
- Inuit Management Practices
- Inuit Ways of Self-enforcement or Self-Regulation
- Land Ownership
- Education
- Outside perspectives
- Research
- Working under someone else's management system
- Power Dynamics

The Collective meeting participants raised the following additional key points:

- Communications
- Observation/monitoring
- Power dynamics
- Relationships with Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)
- Self-determination
- Sharing
- Decision making abilities / veto power
- Using Inuit concepts, approaches
- Shipping
- Biases in decision-making
- Knowledge of laws that support Inuit rights
- Impacts of boarders
- Availability and accessibility of food sources
- Inuit Circumpolar initiatives and economy

Photo: Carolina Behe

On Personal Experiences and Climate Change

To begin the discussions, participants were asked to share their experiences over the past year in gathering food for themselves, their families, and for their communities, while considering what is supporting or impeding our food sovereignty. Throughout the discussions there was a strong focus on climate change and many other interconnecting facets of food security, such as changes in weather, animals, infrastructure, economy, accessibility, and availability.

Below is a brief list of climate, weather, water, air, and animal-related changes and concerns that participants emphasized during the discussion:

- Unpredictable weather patterns and changes in seasonal timing
- Large animal die offs and animals with unusual hair loss and sores in Alaska (i.e. birds, walrus, salmon)
- Changes in snow type and coverage
- Increase in rain and storm surges
- Change in timing of ice formation and break-up and change in the way that the ice forms and melts
- Change in movement of ice
- Changes in air and water currents and temperatures
- Decreasing health of water and air
- Harmful algal blooms
- Pollution
- Change in availability and accessibility to food sources
- Changes in animal behavior, health, and migration timing and patterns
- New species in some areas (such as bears, grasshoppers, bison, salmon, and frogs, walrus, whales)
- Declining populations of certain species (ptarmigan, king salmon, muskrats)
- Overabundance of certain species in some areas (geese, moose, wolves, beavers, lynx)
- Ocean acidification
- Negative impacts of shipping on animal health and migration patterns
- Negative impacts of planes on animal health (i.e. walrus haul outs)
- Erosion

Through this discussion, participants underlined the change and increasingly unpredictable weather patterns and how this affects hunting and harvesting activities. For example, known hunting trails have become unsafe with increased open water; some are facing new challenges in food preparation and preservation as temperatures increase and there is a loss of permafrost (requiring new storage techniques). In addition to changes in weather, people are facing increasing erosion, causing the need for some communities to make plans to or consider relocation, loss of hunting cabins, and changes in the visibility and taste of water.

Photo: Eilene Adams

Many examples were provided of weather conditions not aligning with traditional harvesting times. For example, it is important to harvest salmon when the weather is conducive to drying the meat and before flies have arrived. Recently, there is an increase in precipitation during a time that was once known to be dry - requiring people to adapt to the time of harvesting. In other examples, people choose not to harvest because it was not possible to process the catch without wasting. For example, in one community a decision was made not to harvest beluga because the animal could not be processed fast enough in the high temperatures.

Participants also shared the impact of decreasing accessibility to food sources due to climate change. In one year, four Alaska communities declared harvest disasters because they were unable to access walrus due to sea ice conditions. Other participants shared how their accessibility to food sources has decreased due to erosion (unable to access or loss of hunting camps, loss of ground, and relocation), late ice freeze-up, early ice break-up, change in movement of ice, and unsafe weather conditions.

Participants noted that even with the change it is important to understand that animals go in cycles. As one participant shared, "Some years, we had

Photo: Carolina Behe

pretty good season. And some years, look like everything is gone." Other participants noted the importance of understanding and using our knowledge and rules. For example, when animals offer themselves and they are not taken the animal numbers will decrease. Or when animals are disrespected, they will not offer themselves.

In talking about changes in animal migration patterns, participants noted that animals are migrating at different times, to different areas, and in new patterns. A few participants offered that a few animals are moving toward the coast. Some participants offered that the animals are following the food and others shared that the animal migration toward water is associated with the coming of a great famine and lack of respect that has been given to the animals.

Throughout the discussion, participants reiterated that animals are adaptive. For example, Ayveq[3] (walrus) have adapted to decreased sea ice and are known to give birth in the water. Discussions also covered some of the ways that communities are dealing with animal overabundance. Participants from the ISR shared that incentives to hunt beavers and wolves have helped to keep those populations in check. Participants also offered other ways that they are adapting. For example, in one community people are hunting more moose when there is fewer caribou available.

Photo: Eilene Adams

3 From the St. Lawrence Island Yupik dialect

Participants raised additional concerns about the impact of increased shipping activities on the disruption of animal migration, impact on animal health, and as a source of pollution; increase in low flying planes disrupting animal migrations and, in some cases, causing animals to be trampled (i.e. walrus haul outs). Both activities are associated with an increase in human accessibility (due to a lack of ice) and increasing research and tourist activities.

In discussing all of these changes and food sovereignty, it is clear that challenge arises when the federal, state, or territorial government policies and regulations do not adapt fast enough or take account of the reasons that the changes are occurring. For example, in Alaska, federal and state harvesting calendars do not reflect the changes in the weather and account for food processing activities that align with harvesting.

Photo: Carolina Behe

An additional challenge comes from top-down policies and lack of knowledge about our ways of life. Our communities hold many adaptive and quick decision-making solutions. Our decision-making is intimately tied to the land, coastal seas, animals, and plants. Our knowledge is required to understand the changes that are occurring and to address the challenges that the world faces today.

On Inuit Ways of Life Reflected in Management

Although we do not use the term "management" to describe it, we have been part of this environment for thousands of years. Throughout the project, participants have repeatedly stressed that 'management' is not a new concept; that our ancestors thrived by living an Inuit way of life, using our Indigenous Knowledge, our rules/laws/practices. As one participant shared, "We have our own way of life, we have our own laws." These include our values that need to be at the forefront of all management discussions. Are our values reflected in federal, state, territory, or international regulations, policies, or agreements?

During these discussion participants highlighted the fact that outside regulations do not capture the emotional and spiritual connection that we have to hunting, harvesting, fishing, or being part of the environment. Often times there is a lack of knowledge about what our food security is, assuming it is just about nutrients, calories, and money, rather than about our culture, our knowledge, or our own rules/laws/practices. Concern was also expressed about the differing interests of why people are involved in management discussions or related activities. As a participant shared, "…many agency representatives take on positions to build their resumes. But this is our lives…it is everything that we are."

Participants pointed out that Inuit rules/practices are adaptive, flexible, and allows for quick decision making. Participants from both the ISR and Alaska felt that this ability to make quick decisions is not always reflected in the co-management systems that we operate within today. Working within a slow-to-adapt system has become more of a challenge as rapid rates of climate change makes weather and related factors (i.e. migration patterns, birthing) harder to predict.

Participants shared that within both national governments and international forums, many overarching polices and agreements are developed from or with people that hold little to no knowledge about the Arctic or our way of life. This requires a lot of time and energy spent on educating those that make decisions that directly impact or influence our lives and homelands.

For example, many policy and decision-makers lack an understanding of the important role that harvesting plays in our physical and mental well-being. Participants stressed that being on the land, hunting, fishing, and gathering is about spending time together and being connected to the land, the water, animals, and plants. Several participants shared that harvesting is their identity, what elevates their spirits, what grounds them, or what makes them feel whole. It is also an opportunity to learn and to teach. When traditional hunting activities are interrupted or stopped by regulations, it has far-reaching impacts.

Participants offered concerns about regulations or policies that conflict with our ways of life and values. For example, many participants expressed the need to, "…follow the weather and to follow the animals…" (Workshop Participant. 2019), as opposed to trying to control it. Examples were offered of decreasing quotas or moratoriums on geese or moose hunting, which resulted in an overabundance of both animals. Moose in particular areas are now eating up all of the vegetation. An over population of geese in other areas are now causing negative impacts to vegetation. Rather than applying adaptive decision-making, the responsive actions of others pivot on an attempt to control species populations without recognizing how such actions adversely impacted all other interconnected relationships within an environment.

Other examples were offered that highlighted regulations that do not align or coincide with harvesting times. As a participant offered, as a result of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, people within one area were expected to harvest some birds after the spring season. However, the best time to harvest these birds is in the spring. Indigenous Knowledge passed through generations has taught us the best time to harvest different animals and at what point in the animal's life to harvest them. These practices benefit both the health of the animals and us. Many of the practices are rooted in respect and the importance of never taking more than you need or wasting any part of the animal and a deeper understanding of the migration and lifecycle of such animals.

Photo: Shannon Williams

During this discussion, participants from the ISR commented that because of the IFA and the integral role that Hunters and Trappers Committees play, there are avenues to ensure Inuit ways of life are reflected in decision-making. Examples included the following:

- Quotas are self-imposed (for example, voluntary fish closures)
- Decisions are made starting at a community level
- Each community makes decisions about what occurs within their geographic area
- Communities are able to make decisions that work well for them (for example there is no sport hunting permitted in Aklavik, although it is allowed elsewhere)

"Our elders' regulations are really light and really easy to follow. They're really simple regulations. They're not hard to understand, just simple to let us understand as hunters." -Meeting Participant

Photo: Shannon Williams

Participants from Alaska commented that polices and regulations consistently come from the outside, take a top-down approach, and are reflective of values of another culture and not their own. Participants expressed a deep frustration at being so heavily regulated, adding that "…regulations rarely reflect our ways of life." (Workshop Participant. 2019). For example, single species management, siloed research questions, large scale commercial fishery by-catch, catch and release practices used by sport fishing, and certain research techniques which bother the animals (such as placing antennae on the heads of fish) go against our values and our understanding of the world. They further commented that many regulations are often outdated and/or hard to follow (for example, having to consult multiple handbooks before going out to hunt).

In regard to salmon co-management, participants expressed concern that they do not get to make their own decisions or use their own rules/practices; they are forced to abide by the rules of the state and federal government, and feeling and having to beg for a chance to fish a resource that they have depended upon for centuries.

Additional concerns were expressed regarding the constant change in federal and state government staff and representatives. Participants shared that staff and representatives are often coming from a different part of the country and hold no knowledge of our culture or the Arctic.

Participants also identified the following ways that KRITFC has succeeded in getting Inuit ways of life reflected in the current co-management structure:

- Annual meetings with 33 Tribes and seven executive councils that carry out decisions
- Four in-season managers who aid in an adaptive decision making process
- Development of weekly call in opportunities for individuals to share observations, knowledge, wisdom, and feelings
- The inclusion of some Indigenous Knowledge to fill in western science's information gaps

Photo: Eilene Adams

Many participants described some decision-making and polices to be economically driven. This was largely emphasized in relation to the state of Alaska and raises additional points about conflicting interests. For example, the Alaska salmon industry benefits immensely in terms of revenue for the state of Alaska. Alaska participants felt that this economic interest is often placed above our food security and values and is reflected in related policies and regulations.

In the context of international regulations and policies, it was agreed that our way of life is often not included or considered. For example, a ban on

trading or selling seal fur or walrus ivory conflicts with our value and desire to ensure that we do not waste any part of the animal. Similar concerns to those shared about the Alaska system were shared about international regulations and agreements, such as single species management approaches, siloed research questions, 'western' concepts of conservation, such as no-take protected areas, and an approach that does not recognize humans as part of the environment or understand the interconnected relationships within that environment, lacking our holistic understanding of the world.

Having policies, regulations, and agreements that do not reflect our way of life and values is drastically impacting our communities, the animals, water – the whole of the Arctic ecosystem. For example, some participants shared that community members are not engaging or engaging less in certain hunting, fishing, and gathering activities due to increased regulations, changes in climate, and poor local economies. Many participants described how difficult it has been to see their communities be so profoundly impacted by regulations.

Photo: Eilene Adams

"Being able to provide is a privilege. To be able to share with your community and help make them strong, make yourself and your family whole is a real privilege. We live that lifestyle: it is valid, it is pure, and it is good." - Meeting Participant

In addition to the impacts upon our ability to hunt, harvest, and prepare food, material bans such as the seal skin ban, lead to a loss of opportunities to pass on knowledge, take pride in our culture, and an economic source. Participants further commented that many regulations have led to division amongst our people. Division was identified as a main factor which impedes

food sovereignty. Participants stressed the need to continue training young people to hunt, fish, prepare traditional foods, and take pride in their Inuit culture.

"I had exceptional teachers… [what] I learned is we stand firm. We don't waste our food. We don't overkill. We don't take more than we need. We share what we catch with our elders, with our families…there are those of us that want to hold on to our traditional ways that we grew up with and to pass on that knowledge to our younger generation."
- Workshop Participant

Photo: Eilene Adams

On Consultation

The Collective meeting Participants were asked to have an open discussion about what consultation looks like and how the process makes them feel. There are different consultation policies across federal, state, or territorial governments. Agencies within these various levels of government often apply their own interpretations of consultation policies. Throughout the FSSG project, participants shared concerns about consultation being conflated with consent or confused with communications. There have also been a few positive examples related to individuals acting on behalf of government. Many participants stressed that consultation processes are often influenced positively or negatively by the individual scientist, regulator, or decision-maker that engages with our communities, governments (i.e. Tribes), or our organizations.

Again, processes differ greatly between the ISR and Alaska. Therefore, discussions have been grouped by location in order to better explore and understand consultation in both locations. Main topics of discussion to emerge while exploring consultation processes that exist within the ISR included the following:

- Consultation processes are based on what is written in the IFA; founded on the principle that the ISR is Inuvialuit land and that management bodies have to listen to what Inuvialuit say
- New projects go through a process that starts at ground level
- Higher-level governing bodies such as FJMC are able to work with ministers
- If governments want to make changes, they must consult with Inuvialuit.
- Face-to-face consultation at ground level includes elders and Indigenous Knowledge
- Challenges emerge in certain decisions such as commercial fishing or sports hunting, but communities are ultimately able to make decisions at a community level that suit community needs
- Concerns that there are no penalties for not consulting and no enforcement of consultation
- Often working with people that lack knowledge about the region or our way of life

Participants from Alaskan communities discussed challenges and obstacles faced within the consultation process. Main topics of discussion to emerge as participants explored the consultation processes that exist in Alaska include the following:

- Lack of state recognition of Tribes
- Decisions are made by the federal or state government regardless of the input provided by Inuit - often co-managers and Tribal representatives feel that they are wasting their breath
- Different federal management bodies have different standards for consultation
- Both state and federal consultation processes can be altered by current administrations
- Both state and federal regulators rarely know anything about our regions, our needs, or ways of life
- Public hearings are usually not local; it is very difficult to meaningfully engage when cost of travel can be prohibitive
- Consultation at a community level rarely occurs; there can be a disconnect between local needs and the views of regional government

- Cultural differences and cultural misunderstandings occur often between Inuit and western managers, scientists, and regulators

"How can you co-manage something when somebody else is on top of you all the time. They don't listen to us." - Workshop Participant

Photo: Carolina Behe

Within Alaska, people shared that federal and state governments, or other institutions, often claim to have gone through a consultation process when they share decisions that have already been made or research activities already planned. Often communities are not consulted and activities and decisions move forward without their knowledge. As one participant shared, "…the state literally ignores that we exist out here, as people, as Tribes…they know we are here, but ignore [us]."

Participants also described different consultation processes. For example, there are some consultations processes that include all U.S. citizens and provide a limited time for testimony (often limited to 3 to 5 minutes) to a panel of people that are clearly or openly not listening to the input provided. This ignores the federal governments legal responsibility for government to government consultation.

Other consultation processes describe an opportunity to educate and guide representatives that lack knowledge of our culture or a holistic understanding of the Arctic. A participant shared, "I thought consultation was a back and forth [discussion] and getting permission from us. But it is not about permission, it is about saying [the federal, state, or researchers] this is happening."

Participants shared that the IFA and processes within the ISR support and require consultation. There is a process that requires engagement with communities through the Hunter and Trapper Committees, requires engagement with the IGC, screening processes through the Environmental Impact Review Board (which reviews all projects that have a potential impact on the region), and a process that requires a research license to conduct any research within the ISR.

Other participants shared a need for stronger, 'meaningful' consultation, explaining that often the federal or territorial governments have a different understanding of what 'meaningful' consultation is. Again, this comes down to individual people. There are examples where meaningful and trustworthy relationships have been developed within both Alaska and the ISR. Where these strong relationships exist, there is a stronger shared understanding of what 'meaningful' consultation means.

Photo: Carolina Behe

"We have Inuvialuit final agreement. That's a legal document with the federal government. That puts us way ahead of any other organization in Canada. We take it to heart to hold the government accountable." - Workshop Participant

While there are policies and processes to support consultation within both Alaska and ISR (i.e. the IFA within the ISR and government-to-government policies within Alaska), participants expressed a need to have accountability to ensure that people are adhering to these policies. An example was provided in reflection of the number of vessels passing by ISR communities without their knowledge.

"Our style of consultation. No phones. It's not called consultation when somebody phones you. It's face-to-face and it has to be with that." - Workshop Participant

Photo: Carolina Behe

There are also international agreements that support consultation and meaningful engagement of Indigenous peoples, such as the United Nations Declaration the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration).[4] The UN Declaration affirms the right to 'free, prior, and informed consent'.[5] When participants raised examples of international instruments that support their rights, a question was raised about why government agencies were not required to implement these agreements, such as the UN Declaration.

Participants also shared that consultation processes become challenging at different scales (i.e. regional, national, international) and depending on what the topic is. Different topics may come with competing values and agendas, such as those that are opposed to our hunting culture or those with economic driven interests.

Participants shared important components of consultation and the management of our land and resources. These components included managers taking responsibility for recognizing that they are at our table when they come to us; use of translators for elders at meetings; providing food at meetings to make the space more welcoming; choosing times for meetings that fit the needs of the community; using plain language rather

[4] UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295, available at https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html

[5] UN Declaration, a*rticle 19* States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

than academic jargon; and taking responsibility to know about our culture, the laws that support our rights (i.e. IFA, UN Declaration, government-to-government requirements, agreed upon consolation practices, including when and how consultation will occur).

Equity

Photo: Shannon Williams

One of the themes that has arisen often throughout the FSSG project is equity, working within another culture's management systems, and power dynamics. Equity—and a lack of equity—in management and decision-making and utilization of Indigenous Knowledge has been central to most discussions about the co-management process. During the Collective Meeting, participants were asked to have an open discussion about equity and what kinds of equity or inequity exist in the co-management systems.

Participants from communities in the ISR described how Inuvialuit representation starts at a community level. Within each of the six ISR communities there is a Hunter's and Trappers Committee (HTC). The HTC is made up of elected officials that sit on the committee for two years. One member from each of those Committees is appointed to sit on the IGC. This structure supports each community having representation on the Council. Everything begins with the HTCs. Participants indicated that this allows more equal representation in decision-making. They also noted that "ground up" decision making leaves more space for inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge and what the elders say. Inuvialuit participants commented that IFA provides for equal opportunity. However, they identified the following ways inequity at times appears in working with territorial and federal government:

- Difficulty bringing focus to Arctic issues at a federal level (for example, there is only one ice breaker and little infrastructure to deal with disasters)

- A tendency for people to group Indigenous Peoples together (for example, thinking that Inuvialuit are the same as the rest of the First Nations in Canada)
- Decisions are made by majority vote at the higher levels of government; although Inuvialuit have a platform for their voice, they can still be out-voted
- At some levels, lack of understanding about our culture and ways of life
- Lack of funding for the gathering and inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge

Participants from Alaskan communities described how they used community-based representative bodies such as Tribal councils, city councils, and village corporations to give voice to community members.

Photo: Eilene Adams

Within the co-management system, the Alaska Native Organizations are made up of representatives from the communities they represent. The EWC is made up of 19 commissioners – each commissioner appointed by their relevant Tribal Council. The KRITFC is made up of 33 commissioners – each commissioner appointed by their relevant Tribal Council. The EWC and KRITFC carry forward the voices of the communities and their Indigenous Knowledge.

Alaskan participants described a lack of equity at multiple levels. Many participants indicated that while we are sometimes successful in fighting to have our voices heard, true equity and equal partnerships within co-management rarely exist. This offset is primarily because no true co-management exists within Alaska. Below is a brief list of inequities faced within the Alaskan co-management system:

- State of Alaska gives everyone, including non-Native people, hunting and fishing rights (this does not include marine mammals)
- Lack of equity in decision-making and lack of equal representation on co-management boards
- Large scale power imbalance (asymmetry); federal and state government set on maintaining those imbalances
- A pervading sense that money equals power
- A lack of trust and respect for Indigenous Knowledge apparent from scientists, managers, and policy makers;
- lack of trust and respect for knowledge that is unwritten or experience-based
- Indigenous Knowledge comes second or not at all
- Lack of equity in funding
- Feeling of being constantly underfunded and undermined

Alaska participants expressed frustration at being expected to live with being under another culture's imposed management system, the associated power dynamics, and how this relates to equity. In regard to participant reflections on the state, one participant shared, "…they [the state] does not cooperate or support us…they are in opposition to everything we say…it is a constant fight and we are not supposed to fight".

Photo: Carolina Behe

"We struggle with trying to find funding for indigenous knowledge projects. Science is well funded—we see it every day. When it comes to trying to do our own way [using our Indigenous Knowledge], where do we go to?" -Workshop Participant

Research and Community based monitoring

Concerning equity in the context of research, Indigenous Knowledge and science, participants from both ISR and Alaska noted that Indigenous Knowledge and science are often not treated equitably at different scales. Some participants expressed frustration that scientists are regarded with

greater credibility because they hold a graduate degree, while the expertise of our people is not understood or respected. Examples, were provided of scientists or other professionals being dismissive of Indigenous Knowledge or not understanding the knowledge. Participants also shared that while science is funded by federal, state, territory, or international agencies, much more effort is required to fund activities that include Indigenous Knowledge and is often expected to fit within a 'western' model.

To this point, participants also voiced frustration that some scientists and decision-makers think that they can and need to 'validate' Indigenous Knowledge using science. As one participant said, "…we should not have to fit our knowledge into western science."

Many examples were provided of substantially funded research projects that focused on one species (loss of holistic understanding and focus on the wrong species), or to gain information that community members already have. Participants also shared some positive example from ISR, such as a beluga tagging initiative under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada. Through this program two Inuvialuit from each community are hired to tag beluga.

A participant shared that EWC has worked for years to have hunters involved in research projects and activities, such as tagging walrus. Their efforts have been successful and there are examples of hunters on vessels. One example included a project where two hunters joined a research team on a vessel to look for walrus in ice-encrusted waters. The participants shared, "…the fog came and this vessel got lost. They couldn't find walrus. So, our hunter said, "Why don't you stop the engines and let's just listen?" So, they stopped all the engines and they [the hunters] said, "Okay. We can hear the walrus." The scientist couldn't hear. And they [the hunters] said, "We're going to use our sense of smell." The walrus has a powerful smell. They're on ice. So that's how the research vessel finally found the walrus…because of hunters. They [the hunters] knew exactly where they were."

A key theme raised during the meeting was the need for monitoring and observation systems to support Inuit food sovereignty. Through these types

of programs, you are able to have documented baseline data. It is also important that our Indigenous Knowledge is included in this baseline data.

Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants from ISR shared information about their community-based monitoring program. The program includes harvest data. The harvest data is collected by Inuvialuit and under the control of the Joint Secretariat (it cannot be used without Inuvialuit permission). Participants shared that having baseline data has been an important tool in management discussions. The written data provides a reference point to compare to and hold as evidence.

Overall, participants expressed a need for research used to inform decision-making to be community driven (addressing questions and needs identified by the community) and/or co-producing research questions, methodologies, analysis, and output through a co-production of knowledge process.

Language

Throughout the FSSG project, participants have continuously brought up the connection between language and food sovereignty. Participants at the Collective meeting also raised key points about our language, sharing about the significance of being able to use our language. It was further shared that our language is not only verbal, it is also in our body and the way we listen.

Participants commented that learning and teaching our Inuit languages is a way for us to connect to our culture. Due to the cultural significance and positive impacts that language learning, teaching, and speaking can have, participants recommended that our Inuit languages be spoken in the home whenever possible, taught in our schools, and used in management contexts.

Artwork by Meeting Participants

"My grandma used to tell me not to lose who I am, not to lose my language. It's my identity." - Workshop Participant

Many participants pointed out that our languages give life to the stories that elders tell; when stories are told in English, they sometimes lose context or meaning. From a management standpoint, the same can be said for how we talk about our resources and our role in our environment. When meetings are conducted in English by default, some of our Indigenous Knowledge can get lost in translation. A few Inuvialuit participants pointed out that government incentives exist for speaking French but no such incentives exist for speaking Inuvialuktun. It was agreed that use of our Indigenous languages within co-management would support food sovereignty.

Photo: Eilene Adams

However, there are ways that language can also impede food sovereignty. For example, the use of academic or jargon-ridden English can cause confusion for people who are not familiar with certain kinds of vocabulary that are common in management and regulatory meetings. Participants provided examples such as "anadromous" and "extirpate" as common management words which are unnecessarily academic. Other words common within management processes and legislation exist—for example, "substantial"—are not clear or easily defined. We face challenges to our food sovereignty when laws are left up to interpretation or context.

Information accessibility

Throughout the discussion participants shared different points about access to information. It was shared that within the ISR, there is a strong process for ensuring that all community members have access to information used to inform management decisions through the HTCs and IGC. This process may become more challenging at a national or international scale.

Within Alaska, participants expressed frustration at the lack of accessibility or timely access to information being used to make management decisions or share the results of scientific research. As one participant shared, "They don't give us the information that they [the state] have until the last minute and they have the control because we don't see the data. We don't have the money to gather that data."

Inuit Management

Throughout the discussion many examples were provided of Inuit management and formal agreements. One of the strongest examples offered is the Inupiat and Inuvialuit Polar Bear Management Group and the Inupiat and Inuvialuit Beluga Management Group. Recognizing that like Inuit, animals have no borders, and increasing world interest in polar bears and belugas, the Inupiat and Inuvialuit decided to formalize these two groups to advise the U.S. and Canadian federal governments. Through these two groups, directed by Indigenous Knowledge holders, scientists were brought in to collect data. A participant shared that these two groups have been fundamental in addressing arguments raised by those that oppose our hunting culture and inadequate data used by federal governments to make decisions.

Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants talked about a desire to form similar groups. For example, there is a desire to have a formalized group between Alaska and Russia. There was

also discussion about the need to have a formalized Inuit group that is multi-species across all of Inuit Nunaat.

Within this discussion, some participants offered other ways in which they would like to see Inuit working together. One example is pooling monetary resources to implement programs across Inuit Nunaat that did not involve the federal, state, or territorial governments.

Communications

Participants stressed the importance of communication to support Inuit food sovereignty. There is a need to ensure that information is flowing through the communities up through co-management bodies, through the agencies, federal, state, and territorial governments, and back to communities. Within this discussion participants also pointed to the need for education and outreach.

Participants shared that a lot of care has to be taken with communication to ensure that those outside of our culture understand what we are trying to communicate to them. As one participant stated, "… [when communicating with] your top government official… a big thing here is communication and making sure that it's interpreted right. That's the biggest thing, that we need to make sure that comes across…"

A participant from the ISR shared that they are working to improve communications and education on both sides (the agencies and the communities). For example, within the ISR, there was a large initiative to educate people about the IFA. An education module was created and can be accessed online.

Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants shared that another component of communication is outreach. Both the EWC and KRITFC provided examples of communication materials

that have been created to help educate agency representatives about our ways of life and practices.

Recommendations

A main goal of the Collective Meeting was to spend time identifying key actions and recommendations that can help us move towards Inuit food sovereignty and self-governance. Participants were asked to discuss what we need to move toward food sovereignty in our respective countries as well as across Inuit Nunaat. Participants further discussed what can restore our control over all land, coastal waters, and air. Recommendations and action items identified by the participants tended to revolve around three main concepts: unity, the tools that are available to us, and the wellbeing of our culture and the Arctic. The following recommendations were identified by participants and have been grouped within these categories:

Focusing on Unity

- Remain united; we have greater strength when we work with each other
- Communicate with each other across boundaries, regions, and countries to collaborate, coordinate, and learn from each other
- Include all Inuit in this conversation (including representatives from Greenland and Chukotka)
- Band together to find ways to build wealth; use that money to influence government
- Focus on effective communication
- Reveal outstanding issues, collectively
- Strive for balance
- Strong leadership for our people

Using Tools Available to Us

- Know your human rights and supporting instruments, such as UN Declaration
- Know the policies that support your rights, such as the IFA
- Remind governments of their responsibilities to uphold agreements

- Look into what other legal actions we can take; legal research is needed to identify additional tools to use to achieve food sovereignty
- Stop compromising with the state
- Act sovereign; exercise our rights
- Work with legislators and leaders that are open to listening
- Amend ANCSA
- Increase educational outreach and media outreach; get the right information to the right people and get our voices heard
- Assert more control of Northwest Passage traffic;
- Advocate for equity at an international level

Focusing on the Wellbeing of our Culture and the Arctic

- Focus on teaching youth our traditional ways
- Focus on teaching food preparation practices and enhancing our language use
- Ensure our people, in particularly new leaders, are knowledgeable about our rules/laws/practices, federal, state, and government policies, policies and agreements that support our rights (i.e. how to interpret and use the IFA), and international instruments that may be used to advance our sovereignty
- Share positive stories, success stories, and stories that lift us up
- Focus on Inuit health including educating medical experts on our culture, foods, and ways; our environment and our health are interconnected
- Promote and educate about our holistic views and our Indigenous Knowledge (all things are interrelated; we are part of the environment)
- Advocate for research to be community driven and/or directed
- Equitable use of our Indigenous Knowledge in research – equitable funding
- Long-term observation and monitoring programs
- Continue to involve knowledgeable Inuit hunters in research and data collection
- Use our own languages frequently
- Managers should work to understand that all things are interrelated

- Educate managers, decision and policy-makers on the interconnecting health throughout the Arctic environment – For the Arctic to be healthy, we have to be healthy
- Develop a needs assessment using our own knowledge and methods – one that accounts for all aspects of our food security (i.e. culture, accessibility, availability)

Conclusion

This focus group provided an opportunity for continued in-depth discussions about the key themes that have emerged through the FSSG project thus far. This report provides a brief summary of the many rich discussions that took place throughout the two-day meeting. The knowledge, ideas, and recommendations shared during this meeting and the focus groups, workshops, and interviews that took place before it will be shared in the final Food Sovereignty and Self Governance report. The final report is scheduled to be completed by March 31, 2020.

Photo: Carolina Behe